

**North Chicago, IL** – Congressman Mark Kirk announced that the veterans hospital in North Chicago and the Great Lakes Naval Training Center will be receiving more than \$43 million as part of this year's Military Quality of Life Appropriations bill. The bill is scheduled to pass the House Friday with overwhelming bipartisan support.

As a member of the subcommittee that wrote the bill, Kirk secured the funding that will start the construction of a new joint Navy/VA hospital in North Chicago as well as key infrastructure upgrades for the sailors at Great Lakes. The new hospital will treat veterans, sailors and their families.

"This bill contains funding for our new Navy/VA hospital – the first combined Navy/VA facility in the country. It means that our VA will never close and that Americans who wore the uniform here in Illinois will have state-of-the-art health care," Congressman Kirk said. "Passage of this legislation opens the door to breaking ground here in Northern Illinois on a brand new \$100 million VA/Navy center."

The Navy is already moving many of its medical staff to the North Chicago VA. This summer, the VA will be opening a \$10 million suite of new operating rooms to treat veterans and active duty Navy personnel. The legislation scheduled to pass tomorrow in the House would provide the first \$20 million in funding for a \$90 million VA/Navy ambulatory care center and \$15 million parking garage.

An additional \$23 will also be provided to the sailors at Great Lakes. To date, the federal government provided nearly one billion dollars for upgrading Great Lakes, now the Navy's only recruit training facility. Over the last six years, the Navy completed construction on several new barracks, drill halls and a number of training facilities.

The Navy is currently finishing "Battlestations 21", a real-life training simulator with an entire destroyer inside a building.

The facility will help sailors save their ship in a realistic simulation of the bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole*

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Battlestations 21 is scheduled to open for recruits next summer.

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